

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 10375

BEIRUT POUCH BAGHDAD

GENEVA FOR SECRETARY'S PARTY

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IS

SUBJ: LABOR DOVES FORESEE POSSIBLE SECOND KNESSET ELECTION

IN FEBRUARY OR MARCH 1974

SUMMARY: KEY LABOR PARTY DOVES ARE DISCUSSING POSSIBILITY OF SECOND KNESSET ELECTION IN EARLY 1974. POSSIBILITY IS PREDICATED ON ASSUMPTION THAT LABOR PARTY WILL BE UNABLE TO COME TO AGREEMENT WITH ITS COALITION PARTNERS, PARTICULARLY NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY (NRP) ON QUESTION OF NEGOTIABILITY OF WEST BANK, THEREBY MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR FORM NEW GOVT. LABOR DOVES APPARENTLY BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO PREVENT MRS MEIR FROM AGREEING TO NRP'S HARDLINE STAND, ALTHOUGH THEY CANNOT BE UNAWARE THAT SECOND ELECTION WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE MORE FAVORABLE TO LABOR ALIGNMENT THAN FIRST. IN OUR JUDGMENT, DEGREE OF INTRANSIGENCE OR FLEXIBILITY OF LABOR PARTY'S COALITION PARTNERS WILL BECOME CLEAR ONLY IN COURSE OF

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NEGOTIATIONS TO FORM NEW GOVT. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE

THAT LABOR ALIGNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO FORM NEW COALITION WITHOUT RECOURSE TO SECOND ELECTION. END SUMMARY:.

1. WE HAVE BEEN RELIABLY TOLD BY LABOR PARTY SOURCES THAT SEVERAL KEY PARTY DOVES (INCLUDING SEC GEN YDALIN, FORMER AMB RABIN AND TEL AVIV MAYOR RABINOWITZ) HAVE BEEN DISCUSSING POSSIBILITY OF SECOND ROUND OF NATIONAL KNESSET ELECTIONS SOMETIME IN FIRST PARTY OF 1974.

2. THEY SAY SUCH A POSSIBILITY WOULD ARISE UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH, ON THE BASIS ON DEC 31 ELECTION RESULTS, IT WOULD PROVE IMPOSSIBLE TO FORM A GOVERNING COALITION. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, SUCH A POSSIBILITY MIGHT COME ABOUT IF ONE OR BOTH OF LABOR PARTY'S CURRENT COALITION PARTNERS PUT FORTH CONDITIONS FOR THEIR RENEWED PARTICIPATION TO WHICH PARTIES INVOLVED COULD NOT AGREE. THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS PARTY (NRP) HAS ALREADY STATED THAT IT WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN A GOVT WHICH IS PREPARED TO MAKE TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS RE JORDAN WEST BANK. IT ALSO WILL MAKE A NUMBER OF DEMANDS IN SPHERE OF RELIGIOUS RULES AND LEGISLATION. INDEPENDENT LIBERALS (ILP) ON OTHER HAND INTEND TO RENEW THEIR DEMAND FOR CIVIL MARRIAGE LEGISLATION TO WHICH NRP IS STRONGLY OPPOSED.

3. WE WOULD NOTE THAT UNDER ISRAELI LAW, CURRENT GOVT CONTINUES IN OFFICE UNTIL NEW GOVT IS SWORN IN AND EFFORTS TO FORM NEW GOVT MAY BE PURSUED CONSECUTIVELY BY TWO STRONGEST PARTIES IN KNESSET AND MAY LAST UP TO 84 DAYS. IF THERE HAD TO BE SECOND ROUND OF ELECTIONS, PERIOD OF TRANSITION GOVT THUS WOULD BE EVEN LONGER. AS DISQUIETING AS THIS WOULD BE, WE BELIEVE THAT TRANSITION GOVT WOULD REMAIN ABLE TO CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS AT GENEVA ALTHOUGH UNABLE TO CONCLUDE OR SIGN AGREEMENT WITH ANY OTHER STATE.

4. AS OF NOW WE ARE REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT, DESPITE THESE DIFFICULTIES, LABOR ALIGNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO FORM A NEW COALITION GOVT WITHOUT RECOURSE TO A SECOND ROUND OF ELECTIONS. LABOR ALIGNMENT AND ITS PARTNERS IN PAST HAVE FOUND FORMULAS TO BRIDGE APPARENTLY UNBRIDGEABLE
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DIFFERENCES. WHILE CURRENT STANCES OF NRP AND ILP CLEARLY FORESHADOW A DIFFICULT NEGOTIATION, DEGREE OF THEIR INTRANSIGENCE OR FLEXIBILITY WILL BE CLEAR ONLY IN COURSE OF NEGOTIATIONS. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON SPECIFIC ELECTION RESULTS AND PERCEPTION OF DEVELOPMENTS AT GENEVA CONF.

5. WHILE SOME LABOR DOVES MAY FEEL THAT SECOND ROUND OF ELECTIONS WOULD STRENGTHEN POSITION OF LABOR PARTY AND OF

MODERATES WITHIN IT, THERE IS OF COURSE NO GUARANTEE THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN. SECOND ROUND OF ELECTIONS MIGHT BE MORE DIFFICULT FOR LABOR PARTY THAN FIRST, PARTICULARLY IF GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS RUN INTO DIFFICULTY AND IF DOMESTIC ECONOMIC SITUATION WORSENS, AS MANY EXPECT THAT IT WILL. SURELY MODERATES THEMSEVES RECOGNIZE THIS.

6. MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF ABOVE IS NOT SO MUCH THAT DANGER OF PROLONGED CARETAKER GOVT AFTER JANUARY 1 IS REAL ONE (ALTHOUGH THIS IS POSSIBLE, BUT RATHER THAT LABOR DOVES ARE PROJECTING IMAGE OF GREATLY INCREASED POWER WITHIN PARTY. GIVEN MRS MEIR'S HAWKISH VIEWS ON TERRITORIAL ISSUE, IT SEEMS PLAUSIBLE GUESS THAT IF LEFT TO HER OWN DEVICES, SHE MIGHT VERY WELL ACCEDE TO NRP DEMAND FOR COMMITMENT THAT ISRAEL NOT GIVE UP WEST BANK UNDER PEACE SETTLEMENT, SHOULD THIS BE ONLY WAY SHE COULD FORM NEW GOVT. WHAT DOVES EVIDENTLY ARE SAYING IS THAT THEY ARE NOW SO STRONG INSIDE LABOR PARTY, THEY CAN PREVENT MRS MEIR AND HAWKS FROM CAVING IN TO NRP-- EVEN AT COST OF PROLONGING PERIOD OF LAME DUCK GOVT AND BRINGING ABOUT NEW ELECTION. WHETHER DOVES REALLY BELIEVE THEY ARE THIS STRONG, OR ONLY FIGURE IT IS TACTICALLY USEFUL TO PRESENT SUCH IMAGE, IS ANOTHER QUESTION, ANSWER TO WHICH IS UNCLEAR AT THIS TIME.
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